



IN YOUR VIEW

THE POWER OF
SOCIAL
MEDIA

There's no doubting how social media has transformed – and is still transforming – the marketing opportunities for financial brands.

Here and abroad, it's replacing conventional advertising and promotional techniques as it clears entirely novel paths to sales and the promotion of brand immediacy. Right then, where next?

Forum Members are asked for their thoughts about what role social media will play in the future of effective financial services marketing. Their ideas form the backdrop to the future for this evolving and dynamic medium.

CHALLENGES ESTABLISHED BRANDS



JOHN GRIMBALDESTON

Director of Products and Marketing, HML

Social media will be at the heart of the 'social, local, mobile' movement/trend driver which we will witness over the near and mid term. Successful financial services providers have to overcome the lack of trust that the public generally have of the sector and become more than an 'necessary evil'. Social media will play a key role in bringing financial services closer to consumers at the time and in the location that the consumer chooses. In the USA, mint.com is a great example of a brand that uses social media to extend its reach and challenges established financial services brands. In the UK, we need to treat social media channels as ways of engaging customers and delivering product propositions that enhance their lives – not just push advertising messages.

NOT A MAGIC BULLET



GLENN STUBBINGS

Senior Marketing Manager, Fidelity Worldwide Investment

Social media will deepen and strengthen the link with clients. It will turn awareness and transactions into relationships and relationships into partnerships. But social media is not a magic bullet for financial services marketing. Content is king and clients will cast aside bland corporate broadcasts and search out genuinely independent thought leaders. Social media will allow firms to reach specific client segments with ever more targeted offerings in real time. Social media will see marketing become a de facto news service with firms fighting to cut through competitor noise, maintain and grow audience share, stay relevant and influence client thought and actions. Firms will need a strong brand to frame social media interactions, withstand inevitable negative views and empower the firm's individuals to effectively engage with their audience.

SHARING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES



RICHARD COOPER

Head of e.Business, AXA PPP Healthcare

Social media is a powerful tool for AXA PPP to engage with both members and non-members alike. The inherent reach of the social channels is a platform to promote our wide range of added value content and give wider access to experts on the brand website through social sharing, a carefully curated social content plan as well as sharing by our followers and friends themselves. This approach has driven significant incremental traffic to our website and encouraged users to participate in our live chats, but also to share their personal experiences with us through campaigns such as Stand Up to Cancer and our current Smile! campaign. Measures such as reach, traffic and growth in our social communities all demonstrate the relevance of AXA PPP socially to this audience and underpin the role this has to play in leading the way to better health.

CREATE A PERSONALITY



LAUREN WILLINGTON

Senior Account Executive, Broadgate Mainland

Before social media can play an effective role in the future of financial services marketing, firms need to take a more proactive approach to refining their guidelines and policies and decide on the best direction for their company. One of the main challenges facing financial services marketing at the moment is the lack of interactivity on company websites. This will be combated in the future with the emergence of interactive content which use social media platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn or Facebook as drivers of traffic to their sites. Overall, engagement will be key and those who have been on the front foot in creating a presence, and furthermore a personality, for their social media feeds will come out on top as the digital landscape develops.

CREATING CLEAR DIFFERENTIATION



IAN MORGAN

Industry Director, Finance, Google UK

Effective marketing is all about the identification, anticipation and satisfaction of customer needs. Over 20% of internet time is now spent on social networking sites and it is fast becoming the primary way consumers wish to communicate and share their views. Social media provides an excellent opportunity for financial providers to understand the rapidly changing needs of the consumer, to engage and collaborate with consumers to ensure these needs are addressed. Financial providers need to think beyond customer service and make social media strategic to their business as there are tremendous opportunities across brand management, PR, innovation & product development and marketing. Those who get it right can create clear differentiation over their competitors.

BECOMING A CHANNEL IN ITS OWN RIGHT



VINCENZO ZUCCARELLO

Digital Design & Web Content Manager, AIG

Social media has already played an important part in many people's lives. Monetising its value and recognising its benefits will be challenging for most financial institutions. Whenever social media activities on platforms like Facebook, Google+ or Twitter are merged within a strategy plan, it can become a channel in its own right and potentially generate a new income that could rival lead generation or email activities. However, one point to highlight with any social activity is the resources a company is willing to invest; as this channel demands organisations, financial ones even more so, to be proactive and socially engaged with their users. People have been given the power to express themselves through social channels; it's now for the financial institutions to learn, use and evolve in this fast-paced world.

'FINANCIAL PROVIDERS NEED TO THINK BEYOND CUSTOMER SERVICE AND MAKE SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIC TO THEIR BUSINESS.' IAN MORGAN

AN INCREASINGLY SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT



LEE NOON

Head of Life Digital Marketing, LV=

We see social media transforming how brands like LV= engage with their customers, be it IFAs or end-consumers. Through social networks, customers will increasingly gravitate to trusted brands that add value to each interaction, recognised through 'likes' on Facebook, 'views' on YouTube, 'tweets' on Twitter and online conversations. Effective and interactive content marketing will be core to social media success. Whether it's helping IFAs grow their business by sharing ideas and insights through delivering online seminars on LinkedIn, or educating consumers through Hangouts on Google+, social media will be at the heart of the provider-customer relationship. And within an environment that is increasingly social and digital, the brands that will win in the future will not be the ones with the largest marketing budget but the ones that engage most strongly with their customers.

OPINION TRACKER



RENE TEUWEN

Director, Teuwenschouten

The role of social media going forward will be similar to an 'opinion tracker', or like 'mouth to mouth', but on a much bigger scale. Social media can encourage many people to support and back your brand or service in a very positive way. However, when it comes to promoting commercial messages, such as advertising, marketers have to be careful with how this medium is used. Because social media is fast and big, a risk-management plan should be put in place to avoid damage to your brand before the launch of a new product or service.

EXTENSION OF REAL-WORLD PERSONALITIES



BRADLEY GAMAGE

Director, SapientNitro

We are social animals, born dependent on others and throughout our lives seeking support for being part of and contributing to our social world. Social media is an extension of our real-world personalities and should encourage a true two-way conversation between brands and their customers. More often than not, however, businesses forget this basic tenet and use social media to both push their brand message and sell their products. In financial services, being social shouldn't be just about 'what are you doing', but should also be about 'what is happening' - both in the customer's and the business' world. Social media is fast becoming the most important service channel for financial services to engage with their customer's problems, ideas and feedback, then using that data, in real-time, to help improve and amplify customer engagement and satisfaction. To be truly effective, however, it must encourage and embrace that sharing of positive and negative and create a safe and credible place where action is taken and ideas are embraced. It can also give people the time and space to think about their financial goals and support their decisions.



LASER FOCUS ON SERVICE



RONNIE BROWN

Group Digital Manager, Hiscox

Social media is best at allowing people to connect, stay connected and share. So, in this context it will have a major role to play in acquisition as consumers are able to easily recommend, or not, based on their experiences. This means a laser focus on service, via all channels, will be more prevalent as every consumer's voice can be heard and amplified to their network and beyond. Additionally, social media will start to augment existing marketing channels further. More brands are already putting socially driven advocacy at the heart of campaigns, with more traditional channels simply acting as amplification. Social media is also driving a step change in marketing via a need for content. I feel that this desire for content will result in the majority of financial services companies increasingly owning creative territories, rather than relying on product messaging.

CURATE CONVERSATIONS AND COMMUNITIES



ALAN THORPE

Business Development Director, Indicia

Social media is fundamentally transforming customer engagement, redefining the relationship between business and consumer and putting power firmly in the hands of the latter. The all-important word-of-mouth conversations at the proverbial 'school gates' which businesses would seek to influence are now taking place online, in full view. Brands are expected to not only listen to this dialogue and respond empathetically where necessary, but also to go a step further and curate conversations and communities through relevant and inspiring content. Through social media, consumers have the power to control a brand's image through their shared experiences and only genuine, authentic engagement can ensure equity remains positive. Customer engagement isn't a new thought for marketers, but now consumers understand this concept too and, thanks to social media, are holding brands to account. □

HUMAN VOICE



IAN GILES

Director, Ian Giles Marketing

At least financial services marketers now understand the potential of social media, after spending a few years experimenting. It's all about inbound marketing and the 'easy' four-step process that seems so hard to get right: attract, convert, close and retain. Social media lies at the heart of the attraction and retention stages. Attraction comes through sharing noteworthy content and useful information, engaging with your prospects on the social platforms they use, giving a human voice to your brand. Retention comes through using social networks to provide customer service in real-time.

THE HOLY GRAIL



RANA BRIGHTMAN

Senior Strategist, siegel+gale

Social media will be fundamental to how brands connect, engage and innovate in the future.

Increasingly it will become an essential part of the brand experience, enabling brands to get up close and personal to their customers and be at the heart of the conversation when it happens. Ultimately, the more complex a brand's relationship is with its customers, the more difficult it is to cultivate trust. Social media represents a valuable communications tool, but the data it provides is the holy grail – used properly it can prove hugely valuable in enhancing the brand experience. Those who embrace these insights will undoubtedly increase conversion rates and address customer retention issues by delivering more personalised transparent and useful services.

HONEST AND TRUSTWORTHY



GUY GARSIDE

Research Consultant, Consensus Research

Social media can create an online presence that adds value in a different way to the company

website, which is typically very structured and conservative and performs a functional role for the business. To consumers, it may also reflect a corporate world of bankers which they mistrust and cannot relate to. Social media, on the other hand, gives you an online platform where you can start a two-way conversation with customers, engaging with them more informally. This level of interaction can build a more personal relationship with your customers, and potentially a new personality for yourself – someone honest and trustworthy, rather than reckless and irresponsible – so social media could play a key role in the future, rebuilding brand trust through engagement.

EASY AND FRESH



MARCELLO CALABRO

Global Head of Strategic Marketing, Identity & Communication, Pioneer Investments

Social media has proven to be a critical business tool, even for the naturally conservative financial services industry. For an industry that is essentially driven by networking, social media usage has become increasingly important as more advisers turn to integrating it as a core element in their marketing efforts. Customers are also turning to the internet, and social media, for opinions and advice. After recently implementing social media, globally, at Pioneer Investments, we have quickly noticed the importance of leveraging these tools in a way that parallels and enhances our traditional business. Businesses may not be making direct sales via social media, but being active on it will certainly impact a company's bottom line in the long run. We believe in enhancing the client experience and service by sharing knowledge and views in an easy and fresh way – social media will play a large role in facilitating this.

EARNED AND MAINTAINED



GILBERT HILL

Business Development Director, Governor Technology

Most companies today see social media as a broadcast tool, an exercise in making the institution, brand or product more 'popular'. At first, it should only be used as a two-way customer service tool; being open and responsive to client feedback through social media is highly visible, and leaves a semi-permanent record. If your marketing and customer service isn't working effectively, on social media there is nowhere to hide. But get the mix right, and even smaller players and new entrants can punch above their weight, and reach those who don't frequent traditional channels. Over time, through relevant interactions, companies can engage meaningfully with their customers. 'Likes' and 'links' can be bought, but trust and advocacy must be earned and maintained.

CREATING A SYMBIOTIC ECOSYSTEM



JAMIE HAMMOND

Managing Director, Europe, Franklin Templeton Investment Management Ltd

Social networking platforms connect people and disseminate information almost instantly; this is the core of their pervasive influence. The key challenge at Franklin Templeton and for others in financial services is determining how to harness the potential of social networking to connect with customers and clients in a meaningful way. Social networking provides us with an opportunity to increase transparency with our traditional



'GOVERNING BODIES SHOULD UNDERSTAND THE BUSINESS VALUE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND PRODUCE A SET OF GUIDELINES TO SUPPORT BUSINESSES.'

DAVID ISAACSON

'THIS LEVEL OF INTERACTION CAN BUILD A MORE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS, AND POTENTIALLY A NEW PERSONALITY FOR YOURSELF.' GUY GARSIDE

adviser base, as well as the emerging generation of more technology-oriented financial advisers and investors. It creates a means to learn what advisers need and how we can better support them. What does this mean for the future? We think the real future of 'social' in financial services is in our ability to stop chasing 'likes' and create a symbiotic ecosystem that transforms key performance indicators into tangible results, allows clients to get what they want, and for firms to evolve their businesses in a more transparent and collaborative way.

IT'S ABOUT INVOLVEMENT



JOANNE PARKER
Chief Executive, Teamspirit

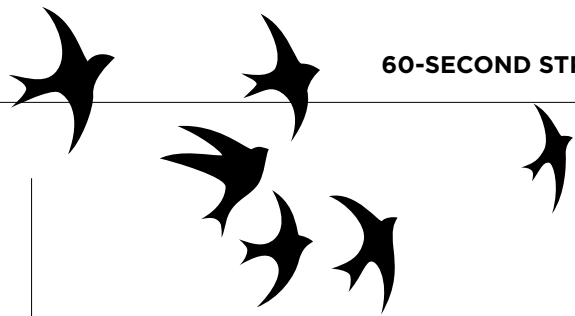
A recent report on the subject concludes that social media will drive the search for brands in the future. Overall, social networks like Facebook and Twitter are the preferred means of discovery for nearly a third of all Americans, up from 18% in 2010. It may be a US-based report, but the trend is clear. However, financial service brands are still putting search engine optimisation and paid search way ahead of engaging social media. And most social media in our sector is still developed with a broadcast mentality. Our view is that having established their own social channels, financial brands need to be more adept at identifying and then becoming a valued member in the communities that matter to their customers. This is about involvement, not promotion, and to do it effectively requires a combination of search, digital marketing, content and PR skills. Only once the brand is a trusted community member can advocates be drawn towards your owned social media channels. And that in turn will drive effectiveness in a number of ways.

COMPETITIVE ARENA



ADRIAN WOOLDRIDGE
Director, Harris Interactive

In recent research we carried out about social media usage, financial services unsurprisingly do not feature in the top brands followed on social networks. Financial services companies have not made their services that interesting to the social media-following public, and other channels continue to dominate. Arguably, it may be new innovative challenger brands which are best placed to impress their new products and services into the competitive social media arena. However, even established players can achieve better results on social media by effectively targeting the most active users, who are likely to act on a campaign, 'retweet' it or recommend it. Social media marketing will be an increasingly important strand in a multichannel approach, with a need to continuously review activity across platforms as well as against the profile of customers and prospects.



ESSENTIAL COMMUNICATION PLATFORM



DAVID ISAACSON
Social Media Planner, Omobono Ltd

We feel current regulations are holding back financial services organisations wishing to develop a meaningful online relationship with customers. Currently, although there are a few innovators in the market, the proportion of those who are not present on social media or have a very guarded presence is very high. We suggest that the various governing bodies should understand the business value of social media and produce a set of guidelines in order to support businesses in their marketing endeavours. Does the future of social media in financial services require deregulation? We think so. We also see this as a great opportunity for marketers to get involved in the dialogue and guide regulators in their attempt to consider social as an essential communication platform.

UNRIVALLED OPPORTUNITY

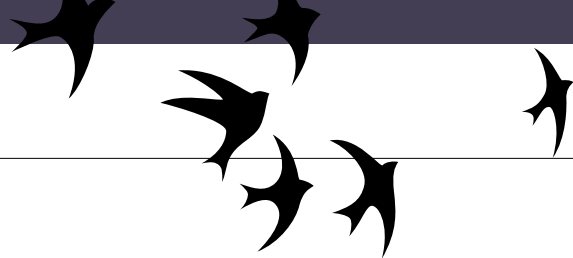


HANNAH GILMORE
PR Director, Living Group

Social media channels such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, Google + and Pinterest provide financial services companies with a range of relatively easy but highly effective ways to supply more timely and relevant branded content direct to the people that matter. Our latest research, 'Living Ratings of Social Media and Brand Content in Professional Services', provides clear evidence that social media has already shattered the barrier of acceptance in two of the three oldest professions - accountancy and law. Why should financial services be any different? In 2013 any marketing professional who talks of social media as an irrelevance is effectively saying that communication is irrelevant too. And this applies equally to a high-street bank, a workplace pensions provider or a hedge fund. The channel mix and frequency will differ for each type of business, but if a company is serious about competing for new clients or fresh talent then social media offers an unrivalled opportunity to connect directly with them - whether they are customers, graduates, investors or employees.

'FINANCIAL SERVICE BRANDS ARE STILL PUTTING SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION WAY AHEAD OF SOCIAL MEDIA. MOST SOCIAL MEDIA IN OUR SECTOR IS STILL DEVELOPED WITH A BROADCAST MENTALITY.'

JOANNE PARKER



'IN 2013 ANY MARKETING PROFESSIONAL WHO TALKS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN IRRELEVANCE IS EFFECTIVELY SAYING THAT COMMUNICATION IS IRRELEVANT TOO.' HANNAH GILMORE

PLATFORM FOR THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



JANE PARRY
Director and Head of Marketing and Business Development, Duncan Lawrie Private Bank

Social media is where the customers are, and if your demographic isn't there now, it is more than likely to be in five to ten years' time. The big impact of social media over the next few years will be as a platform for thought leadership, showing how you're different, and even a human side. Whilst it's unlikely that a customer would invest large sums of money because you have a Twitter account, it's a vast touch point with existing and potential clients – a great place to position your brand and engage users to think about issues in the financial world or with their own finances.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND TRUST



JAMIES BROOKES
Managing Director, International Head of Marketing & Corporate Affairs, BNY Mellon

Social media is evolving and adapting and plays a key role in our promotional mix. It will help build confidence and trust as we interact with consumers, intermediaries, peers and competitors in the future. But it will not work on its own. As an industry, we still have a long uphill slog to grasp the opportunities we have seen slip away over the past few years. Social media will play its part, but fundamentally it is what we say and do that will help reposition the financial services industry.

WATCH, LISTEN AND LEARN



MARTIN BODDY
CEO, Jaywing
Effective marketing needs to connect the brand, product and service with the consumer. Never

before has there been such opportunity to understand what a consumer thinks, how they feel and if they are engaging with the competition. It is more important than ever for financial services brands to watch, listen and learn to ensure that their messaging is in line with customer expectation. The Natwest banking failure last June saw brand mentions of @NatwestHelp leap eight-fold and followers increase 200%. A slow reaction by the bank did not help customer satisfaction and left the door open for rival banks to engage with unhappy customers, a chance seemingly missed. This very public brand engagement presents opportunities and threats that all financial services companies need to understand, plan for and harness.

FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTABLE



BRIAN BROWN
Head of Consulting, Principal Consultant – Banking & General Insurance, Defaqto

I would argue that in the future the only kind of effective marketing of financial services will be through social media. With decreasing product intermediation, customers are increasingly using their social circles to help them choose products. Providers need to be active in those circles if they are to succeed. The rapid pace of change means that the most effective marketers will be those companies who can adapt to whatever social media is 'the norm' as customer trends change. Knowing which media to concentrate on is vital in this market, as customers rapidly switch the ways in which they share information. Effective marketing will mean having flexible and adaptable customer services staff, with a degree of autonomy to act quickly within the social media spaces on behalf of their company.

INFORMAL, QUIRKY STYLE



STUART GRAY
Managing Director, 2Touch

For all the benefits of using digital tools, the role of online engagement needs to remain focused on customer needs. To build a rewarding presence online, customers need to feel comfortable with a company's 'social side'. Ensuring consistency across brand messages can be your greatest ally to achieving this. Social media, by its nature, lends itself to an informal, quirky style. However, if this is radically different to your usual marketing, it can come across as awkward, annoying or unprofessional to customers, distracting from the purpose of your accounts and damaging offline marketing initiatives. Stay consistent and look forward to reaping the benefits of online engagement.

Join the discussion on the LinkedIn forum too:

SCOTT WILLIAMS
Director, Fishtank

Growth in social media activity, adoption rates and usage across financial services is growing at an extraordinary rate. Brands that truly understand the 'pull' marketing dynamics of social, and the value of aligning this to a more holistic digital marketing strategy, will be the winners.